



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Cereal leaf beetle impacts Washington hay shipments to Canada

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Agriculture took action this week to ensure that alfalfa, grass hay and straw grown in Washington meet new trade requirements put into place Aug. 26 by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The restrictions are intended to stop the spread of the cereal leaf beetle in Canada. Effective immediately, all shipments of alfalfa, grass hay and straw must have a certificate showing that the material was either fumigated or grown in a county that is free of cereal leaf beetle.

“We can issue federal certificates showing that the shipments meet Canadian standards,” said Tom Wessels, manager of the WSDA Plant Services Program. “The restrictions do not apply to materials being shipped to the Creston Valley in British Columbia, where the beetle is already found, or to pelletized or cubed hay or straw products.” Small quantities of hay or straw carried in vehicles only for in-transit use by animals are exempt from the Canadian restrictions.

Shipments of cereal hay and straw must also meet Canada’s requirements for flag smut and dwarf bunt, two fungal diseases of wheat and grass. For information on obtaining a WSDA or U.S. Department of Agriculture phytosanitary certificate, call Wessels at (360) 902-1984.

On the domestic side, a similar quarantine is enforced by California, which does not yet have cereal leaf beetle. Shippers to California need to fumigate and/or obtain certificates before shipping straw and hay, as well as for small grains and ear corn.

Cereal leaf beetle is a significant pest of small grains (wheat, oats and barley), but also feeds on the leaves of wild and cultivated grasses. Originally from Europe, the ¼-inch long iridescent blue beetle has been spreading across the U.S. for the last 40 years.

Beetle found in five additional counties

WSDA, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has conducted an intense annual search for the beetle since it was first detected in Washington in Spokane County in 1999. The goals of the field surveys are to protect Washington small grains by detecting beetles early so that effective control measures can be put into place. By surveying on a county-by-county basis, the survey allows growers in counties that are free of the beetle to ship to California and Canada without fumigating.

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This year, the cereal leaf beetle was detected for the first time in Asotin, Ferry, Garfield, Lewis and Whitman counties. The total number is now 14, including Adams, Clark, Columbia, Franklin, Grant, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane and Stevens counties. For the next few years, WSDA will monitor the population of the beetles in those counties and consider the introduction of a small wasp to control the beetle. To date, all 39 Washington counties have been surveyed.

Hay is the sixth most valuable commodity in Washington state with a 2001 production value of \$375.3 million.

Information on cereal leaf beetle and efforts in using biological controls to mitigate its spread is available on the WSDA Web site at <http://www.wa.gov/agr/PlantsInsects/InsectPests/CerealLeafBeetle/default.htm>.

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